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## COMMUNICATIONS

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### A WORD OF COMMENT

*Editor of the School Review.*

KINDLY allow me a word of comment upon a criticism of Langlois and Seignobos' *Introduction to the Study of History* that appeared in your September number. Under ordinary circumstances I should not feel called upon to make these comments, but I am influenced by the belief that the criticism, if unanswered, might prejudice some of your readers against the book and thus prevent them from using it.

The gist of the criticism is that the attitude of Langlois and Seignobos "toward their predecessors (writers on method) is never generous, sometimes not even just;" that in their book "history is conceived and treated exclusively in the objective sense, as a series of events with a causal nexus," and that "notwithstanding the author's severity toward the ignorance of foreign tongues, still common among French scholars, their own command of foreign literature is not all that might be desired."

Unfairness, ignorance, and lack of scholarship are, indeed, "curious limitations" for men of international reputation like MM. Langlois and Seignobos. A heavy burden of proof rested on the reviewer.

To say that they condemn Freeman and dismiss Droysen's *Grundriss* "as heavy, pedantic, and confused beyond imagination," is not necessarily to convict them of unfairness. These things may be *true*, and while I have always had the kindest feeling toward Freeman and Droysen, I believe that Langlois and Seignobos made no incorrect estimate of the value of their treatises on method. Others may not think so. It is a matter of judgment, not of generosity. As to the assertion that Freeman was "condemned mainly, it would appear, on the authority of a flippant review," it might be well to note that it is not the practice of scholars to condemn a book in that way. The reviewer might have found evidence on page 46 that Langlois had a copy of Freeman's *Methods* before him.

The reviewer's statement that Bernheim "often receives less than simple justice" is not supported by the text (page 10), nor does it agree with the impression made by the book upon Professor Powell,

who speaks, in his introduction, of Bernheim's *Lehrbuch*, "so justly praised and used by our authors."

Chapter IV of Book III is a sufficient answer to the criticism that history is never treated by the authors "as a series of events with a causal nexus."

The last criticism, that of ignorance of foreign literature, is so manifestly unsupported by anything found in the book itself that it occurred to me that possibly the reviewer possessed some outside information.

If the authors have not acquainted themselves with what has been written in English, German, Italian, and Spanish on method, it is not through ignorance of the languages. Of the list of books that they are criticised for barely mentioning, or not even naming, but one is found in Bernheim's *Autorenverzeichnis*. Shall we charge Bernheim with ignorance? Certainly not. Works like those of Altamira, Hall, and Hinsdale have no place in a *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode* nor in an *Introduction aux études historiques*. Possibly Seignobos is as well acquainted with the contents of *La Enseñanza de la Historia* as anybody after the author himself. He refers to it in the proper place, namely, in the Appendix dealing with the *teaching* of history in the French secondary schools.

This book, by Langlois and Seignobos, was the outcome of a series of lectures delivered at the Sorbonne to young university students. "It is a sketch in outline," and "not a treatise on historical mythology, like *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode*." The authors had no call to tell all they knew, nor to quote all the books and essays in German, English, Italian, and Spanish dealing with methods of studying and teaching history. They were writing for a French audience and a popular audience.

These are the comments that I felt called upon to make that the work of these two distinguished Frenchmen might be taken at its true value by the readers of the REVIEW. To those acquainted with the men and their work, no comment is necessary.

FRED MORROW FLING

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